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Travel Montana
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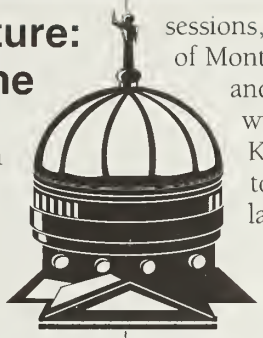
Travel Montana, Department of Commerce, Matthew T. Cohn, Travel Director
406-444-2654 ■ fax 406-444-1800 ■ internet http://visitmt.com

Montana Legislature: Ready To Convene



The 1999 Legislature begins its 56th regular session on January 4. Lawmakers are busy submitting bill draft requests and a number involve tourism issues. You can keep up to date on legislative activities, lawmakers and their bills through the State of Montana's Homepage <state.mt.us>.

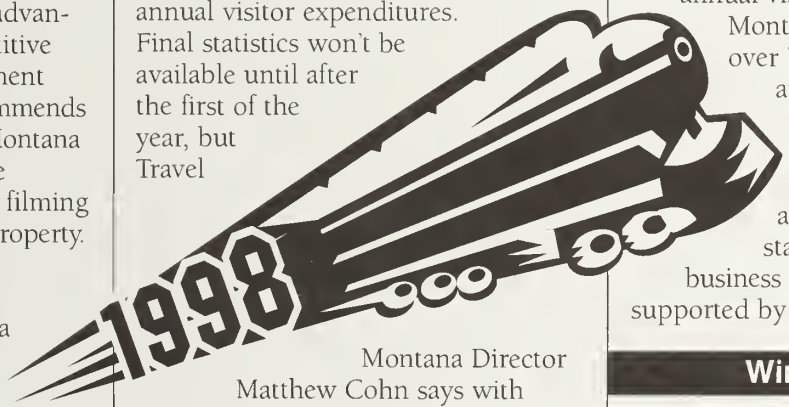
The Governor's major economic development package, Jobs & Income: A Blueprint For Economic Development (also posted on the State's homepage), focuses on improving operating conditions for business and employment in Montana. Three parts of this package specifically focus on the state's tourism and film industry. To help Montana maintain its advantage in the increasingly competitive business of film and advertisement production, the Governor recommends an income tax credit for non-Montana production companies that hire Montanans along with waiving filming fees on state-owned land and property. Over the last decade, film and advertising production has contributed up to $20 million a year for Montana's economy. The Governor's package also recommends development and implementation of a uniform tourism signage program along Montana's highways.

A bill draft incorporating the Bed Tax Futures Task Force recommendations approved by the Montana Tourism Advisory Council (details in the November 1998 UPDATE) has been requested by Representative Shiell Anderson of Livingston. Representative Anderson was a task force member.

As has happened in past legislative sessions, the funding and activities of Montana's statewide, regional and local tourism programs will be discussed and debated. Keep informed and stay in touch with your local lawmakers.

1998: Slow Start, Good Finish

Remember last winter when, for the first time this decade, statewide tourism "bed tax" collections declined? Well, after that slow start, it now looks like 1998 will rank among Montana's top two or three years for visitor numbers. The year should also compete well with records for annual visitor expenditures. Final statistics won't be available until after the first of the year, but Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn says with "bed tax" collections rebounding in the 2nd quarter (up 5%) and reports of strong statewide visitor traffic during the late summer and fall months, the final word on 1998 should be a good one.



"As we said last month, with some of Montana's economic sectors facing challenges we feel fortunate that tourism has kept up its steady, positive contribution to the state this year," said Cohn.

Enjoy the Holidays and let's get ready for an excellent 1999.

Winter Tourism, Taxes, & More: ITRR Has The Info

Ever wonder about Montana's winter tourism activity? Amount of taxes paid by visitors? Tourism's role in the state economy? You will find answers to these and other tourism questions on the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research website: www.forestry.umt.edu/itrr. ITRR posts many of their research reports on this site. Here's some data from recent reports:

Montana's winter vacationers spend about $146 per day or $98 million per season recreating on the state's ski slopes or snowmobile trails. While only 20% of our winter visitors are here specifically for vacation, they contribute 41% of the $240 million in non-resident expenditures made during the state's snow season. Visitors here on business, seeing friends and family or just passing through contribute another $125 million of the total. As a season, winter provides 16% of the state's annual visitor expenditures.

Montana's visitors generate over 7% of Montana's state and local tax revenue during their stay each year. This includes $60 million in state gas taxes and over $52 million in state and local taxes from business and employment directly supported by visitor expenditures.

Winter Season

20% Percent of winter visitors specifically for vacation

41% Percent of non-resident expenditures during winter

16% Percent of annual visitor expenditures during the year

Flathead Hosts SATW Meeting

Northwestern Montana begins the new year hosting the Winter Meeting of the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) West Coast Chapter, January 5-9.

Whitefish and The Big Mountain are the base camp for 60 active travel writers/photographers expected for the SATW gathering. The media guests will have a chance to explore Glacier Park, the new Blacktail Ski Area, Bigfork and surrounding areas.

After the meeting, SATW members will venture out across Montana on four different group tour itineraries: a winter recreation trip north into Montana's Tobacco Valley and British Columbia; a winter ranch vacation experience in the Seeley Valley; a cultural/heritage tour south to the Flathead, Mission, Missoula and Bitterroot Valleys; and a Lewis & Clark In Montana Tour through Browning, Great Falls, and Helena.

The Flathead Convention and Visitors Bureau, Grouse Mountain Lodge, The Big Mountain, Travel Montana and Glacier Country are the hosts/sponsors for the travel writers' gathering. Many other area and statewide businesses have contributed to the meeting's organization and operation as well.

TRAVEL MONTANA'S 1998/99 TOURISM AND FILM MARKETING PLAN IS AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET: www.com.state.mt.us

Lonie Stimac & Montana Film Office Honored By Peers

Travel Montana's Film Office Manager Lonie Stimac is the 1998 Arthur Loew Jr. Crystal Vision Award winner. The award, presented by the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI), recognizes the marketing and teamwork skills Lonie has employed promoting on-location filming. She has chaired AFCI's Publications Committee, initiated its Global Passport program and spear-headed the design of the new AFCI logo unveiled at this year's AFCI Cineposium in Denver where she was elected 1st Vice President.

Also at this year's Cineposium, the Montana Film Office received four first place AFCI marketing awards and one third place recognition for its ads, direct mail and brochure campaigns inviting the film, TV and ad production industry to work in Montana.

Montanans Court NTA Members, Receive Awards

Twenty-four Montana tourism service suppliers joined Travel Montana's Pam Gosink and Marlee Iverson in courting the nation's group tour industry at the National Tour Association's (NTA) convention in St. Louis last month. Marlee reports that interest in Lewis & Clark is quite high and more tour operators are becoming knowledgeable about what Montana has to offer.

The Montana contingent hosted 115 tour operators at a "Montana Night" dinner/education event aboard the Becky Thatcher Riverboat. Sales leads from the NTA convention are available from Marlee or Pam, 444-2654.

NTA's Foundation (NTF) has also honored two Montanans with scholarships. Western Montana College student Amberly Pahut of Helena received a student award. Jeri Mae Rowley, Montana's SUPERHOST Coordinator and Flathead Valley Community College instructor, received one of NTF's two Visiting Scholar Awards.

Congratulations, Amberly and Jeri Mae!

Travel Montana Calendar

December

9	6 p.m. SUPERHOST!, Stagecoach Inn, West Yellowstone
10	9 a.m. SUPERHOST!, Stagecoach Inn, West Yellowstone
6-11	ABA in Milwaukee

January

4	56th Montana Legislature Convenes, Helena
5-9	SATW Convention, Whitefish
10-13	SATW Media Tours
27-30	RMI Winter Roundup, Big Sky

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